

INS REPORTER

Houston District Office

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Director's Corner

Welcome to our second edition of this newsletter. The editorial staff and I continue to be pleased with your feedback and observations for further improvement so please continue to do so by calling or contacting us directly via email at ins.houston.districtdirector@usdoj.gov.

Points of Interest

- Office Closures
11/11/02 Veterans Day
11/28/02 Thanksgiving Day
- Naturalization Ceremony
11/12/02 –N400
- Customer Service Center
1-800-375-5283
www.ins.gov
- TPS El Salvador
Re-registration due
9/9/02–11/12/02
- Information Outreach Session
Southwest Houston 11/21/02

October, the first month of our Fiscal Year 2003, provides us with a unique opportunity to analyze, strategize and plan for the coming year. It is also a good month to start new and challenging initiatives. One of these initiatives is the theme of my message this month: Providing customer service in the community (or as our good friend Marcelo Marini stated “el INS en el barrio”).

The concept is simple. Every morning customers line up in front of the INS office

searching for basic forms, information, case inquiries or general guidance on matters affecting them or their loved ones. Some customers travel long distances (our district covers 31 of the most populous counties in the State) and others come in unaware that forms, information and even “how to” guidance is available, free of charge, via the INS web page and other sources of information. In order to assist customers with their information and service needs, and in close partnership with community based

organizations, service providers and congressional offices, we will be providing these services in community settings taking into account the most favorable times and locations.

We are committed to a two-tier approach: Serving customers in outlying areas and those in the immediacy of Harris County. The Office of Congressman Ron Paul hosted our first outreach initiative in the Freeport area last month. The rain did not stop the steady flow of customers and some 55 customers received personalized” service from one of the outstanding members of our team. We were able to deliver forms, information and even provide case status updates (as appropriate). We are in the process of planning our next session with the Office of Congressman Jim Turner in Lufkin at the beginning of the year. We invite other offices to work with us as we visit customers residing in outlying service areas.



Our Harris County customers do have the advantage of proximity but we do want to take our services to their community as well. We are currently planning our first information seminar with CARECEN and will also encourage other community-based organizations to join us in this community driven service endeavor. Our staff stand ready to assist.

I welcome each of you to read this newsletter and ask you provide us with feedback and observations.

Hipolito M. Acosta

Hipolito M. Acosta
Interim District Director

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INS ANNOUNCES CASE STATUS ONLINE

The Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) announced the successful implementation of Case Status Online--a concrete example of INS' commitment to improving customer service while guaranteeing process integrity.

Customers who have a receipt number for an application or petition filed at an INS Service Center can check the status of their pending case online through the INS website and avoid prolonged waits on the phone or at a local office.

"We shared the frustration of customers and employees who complained that there was no easy way to check the status of a pending case," said INS Commissioner James Ziglar. "We expect that the availability of Case Status Online

will reduce the number of customers who need to call or visit INS in person for this information. It also allows local field offices to focus on providing services that are only available by appointment or in-person visit."

Many Applicants for Benefits Can Check Case Status Using the Internet at www.ins.gov

Customers who do not have a receipt number will continue to receive information about their case by calling the National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283 or 1-800-767-1833 (TTY for the hearing impaired) or by visiting their local INS field office.

The Case Status Online System is only the first of many improvements that will take place as the INS implements Immigration Services Modernization and will fundamentally transform and improve the Immigration Services' program. Immigration Services Modernization is centered on service to customers and stakeholders; employee development; process, technology and business improvements; and management infrastructure.

For more information, please access the INS web site: www.ins.gov or call the INS National Customer Service Center: 1-800-375-5283. Forms can be easily downloaded from the INS web site, or 1-800-870-FORM.

SEVIS Enrollment Update

The "SEVIS Update" highlights the latest information related to the Immigration and Naturalization Service's implementation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

Currently, INS has met all milestones associated with the SEVIS implementation. The Service is confident that the system will be fully operational by January 1, 2003, as mandated by the United States Congress. The following information highlights the current status of the SEVIS implementation:

BY THE NUMBERS

- ◆ Schools fully approved to use SEVIS – 1,283
- ◆ Schools with submitted applications – 993
- ◆ Schools with draft applications – 101
- ◆ Total school contacts – 3,377

SEVIS TIMELINE:

ACTION	STATUS
Proposed SEVIS vocational & academic foreign student visa rule published	Complete – May 16, 2002
Roll-out of SEVIS on-line mode	Complete – July 1, 2002
Kick-off voluntary participation & preliminary enrollment	Complete – July 1, 2002
SEVIS batch beta testing	On-schedule – September 23, 2002
SEVIS certification rule published	Complete – September 25, 2002
INS begins on-campus site reviews	On-schedule – October 1, 2002
Roll-out of SEVIS batch mode	On-schedule – October 15, 2002
DVD of SEVIS training session available	On-target – End of October 2002
Final SEVIS vocational & academic foreign student visa rule published	On-target – November 2002
SEVIS fully implemented	On-target – January 1, 2003
Mandatory SEVIS usage date	On-target – January 30, 2003

SEVIS ASSISTANCE

In an effort to provide comprehensive technical assistance, INS is providing a call-in help desk. Live technical assistance is available from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Since July 1, 2002, the help desk has responded to more than 10,500 inquiries. Additionally, INS has just finished producing a 1½ -hour training session. The session is available via DVD by emailing your request to: HQADN-SEVP@usdoj.gov.

INS recently completed a study of the schools that sponsored foreign students during the past three years. We determined that 7,400 schools are actively involved in bringing foreign students to the United States. INS is confident that we have the resources at hand to certify all schools that apply to use SEVIS. To date, more than 3,000 schools have contacted INS requesting permission to use SEVIS.

QUESTIONS OF THE MONTH

How does INS plan to certify 72,000 schools by January 30th?

We don't. It's true that 72,000 schools have at one time or another participated in the foreign student program. The vast majority of those institutions are not currently active participants. Many are no longer in business. Many only participated on a one-time basis. Many were public elementary and middle schools that can no longer sponsor foreign exchange students.

Currently, INS has met all milestones associated with the SEVIS implementation. The Service is confident that the system will be fully operational by January 1, 2003 as mandated by the U. S. Congress.

How can INS insure that only valid schools are currently participating in the foreign student program?

That's the beauty of the January 30, 2003 mandatory participation date. In order to use SEVIS, schools must apply for certification. During that process, INS will verify the validity of each school's request to include conducting an on-campus site review for each institution. That means as of January 30, INS will have an active, accurate database containing only those schools recently approved to use SEVIS and participate in the foreign student program. In order to maintain the integrity of the information in SEVIS, each participating school will be required to undergo re-certification every two years.

PAKISTANI MOTHER OF SIX GETS NATURALIZED AT HOSPITAL

Sughra Bibi, a Pakistani mother of six had been a Permanent Resident in Houston, Texas since 1995. After filing her application for citizenship, Mrs. Bibi fulfilled all the requirements for naturalization, however, as the time went by, her medical condition for a delicate heart condition kept her bed-bound and too weak to come to the INS office. On the day she was scheduled to take the oath of citizenship, Mrs. Bibi was too ill to even stand, let alone speak. Her children contacted the Houston District INS office in hopes of having her naturalization date rescheduled. Upon hearing of Mrs. Bibi's delicate condition, Ramon Vasquez an Adjudicating Officer here at the local office, made arrangements to go visit with Mrs. Bibi at her home. Officer Vasquez with District Director, Hipolito Acosta, stopped by Mrs. Bibi's home, but upon arriving at the residence, her family told them that Mrs. Bibi had become very ill over night and that she had been rushed to a local hospital. Immediately, Officer Vasquez and Director Acosta arranged to visit with Mrs. Bibi and her family at her hospital bedside. On August 14, 2002, Mrs. Bibi with a weak heart, but a strong spirit, lifted her hand and took the oath of allegiance willingly and without any reservation. Today, Mrs. Bibi's delicate heart condition still keeps her close to home, but she can proudly say that she IS a FELLOW AMERICAN.

Application Support Centers (ASC)

I-90's filed at Local INS District Office:

REPLACEMENT OF:
Lost or stolen;
Damaged;
Legal Name Change;
I-551 mailed but not received;
Destroyed or incorrect card issued by service center;
I-151 old edition;

Alien commuter now residing in the U.S.
Change from temporary to permanent resident (Special Agriculture Worker)
Age 14

\$130.00 MONEY ORDER
PHOTO IDENTIFICATION
2 COLOR PHOTOS (as specified on the application).
EVIDENCE OF COURT ORDER establishing new data.

Local office will issue temporary evidence of lawful permanent residence by stamping passport or issuing an I-94 good for employment authorization or travel.

I-90's filed at ASC:

All I-551 cards with an expiration date and in good condition must be filed at the ASC's within 6 months of expiration date.

\$130.00 MONEY ORDER
2 PHOTOS (AS SPECIFIED)
COPY BOTH SIDES OF I-551

ASC will place an extension sticker on the back of present card valid for one year to work and travel.

**IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE
126 NORTHPOINT DRIVE
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This is an unofficial electronic newsletter published monthly by the Houston Office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to help provide immigration-related information to INS external audiences. This publication should include but is not limited to our monthly progress report, web site, phone numbers, contact names, brief explanations of INS processes and procedures.

For more information check our web site at
www.ins.usdoj.gov